

1963

## News and Notes

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## NEWS AND NOTES

### *Mission of Nombre de Dios*

Preparations are well under way at the Mission of Nombre de Dios for observance of the Mission's fourth centenary in 1965. America's oldest mission, Nombre de Dios was founded as a missionary site on September 8, 1565, when Father Francisco Lopez de Mendoza Grajales offered there the first Mass in the first permanent European settlement within the present continental limits of the United States. This Mass was the first community act of Christian religion in the United States.

At Nombre de Dios Spanish priests founded America's first mission to the Indians, antedating the better known missions of California by some 200 years. From that pioneer mission hundreds of priests and laymen advanced into an unknown continent and built a chain of missions that carried western civilization into the Carolinas and west as far as Texas.

In 1965 the Mission will be privileged to observe the 400th anniversary of those historic events. Plans for a celebration to commemorate the specifically religious side of St. Augustine's Quadricentennial were laid approximately one year ago and are now in a state of gratifying progress. Among these plans the following may be of particular interest to the readers of the *Quarterly*:

1. A towering illuminated Cross, approximately 100 feet in height, will be built on the Mission grounds to observe the first act of Menendez on stepping ashore at that site—that of kissing the Cross.
2. A library-archives-exhibition hall complex will be built on the Mission grounds in which to store and to exhibit the Mission's deposit of documents and books, including the old Parish Registers that date from 1594 and are the oldest written records of any kind in the United States.
3. The grounds of the Mission will be beautified and landscaped under the direction of Eugene F. Kennedy, F. A. I. A., of the Boston firm of Maginnis, Walsh and Kennedy. Mr. Ken-

nedy has been engaged as architect for all of the new construction at the Mission.

4. The Diocese of St. Augustine, through the offices of the Mission, has granted two research assistantships to the department of history of the University of Florida. The recipients of these grants are Luis R. Arana, of the National Park Service in St. Augustine, and Charles F. Fleener, Ph.D. candidate from Washington, D. C. Messers. Arana and Fleener will assist a team of priest-historians in researching early Florida documents.

5. A team of five priest-historians is currently at work preparing monographs on the history of the Catholic Church in Florida from 1565 to the present. The five priests are Fathers Michael V. Gannon, Charles Spellman, Matthew Connolly, Thomas Burns, and David Page. All hold graduate degrees in history. The areas to be covered in the monographs are: exploration of Florida and founding of St. Augustine, 1513-1567; the missionary period, 1567-1763; English occupation and the second Spanish Period, 1763-1821; territorial and early state periods, 1821-1876; and the modern period: a retrospect, 1876-1965.

The completed series of monographs will be published in a special St. Augustine Quadricentennial issue of the *Catholic Historical Review*. The *Review* is edited and published at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., and reaches a national scholarly audience.

Other plans for the Quadricentennial celebrations will be at the Mission in 1965 certain noteworthy ecclesiastical and civic documents from archives in Spain. The present Adelantado of Florida, El Conde de Revillagigedo, has offered to place on exhibit at the Mission the original *Memorial* of Dr. Gonzalo Solis de Meras, brother-in-law of Menendez, who accompanied the latter on his voyage to Florida in 1565.

Other plans for the Quadricentennial celebrations will be announced at a later time.

[The *Quarterly* is grateful to Father Michael V. Gannon of the Mission of Nombre de Dios for providing the foregoing sketch of plans for the Quadricentennial observances.]

#### *Local and Area Societies and Commissions*

*Historical Association of Southern Florida:* At the April meeting

of the Association, Dr. John E. Johns, business manager and acting chairman of the department of history of Stetson University, gave an illustrated lecture titled, "By What Right is this Blood Shed?" This was a dramatic account of the Civil War in Florida, based upon Dr. Johns' newly published book *Florida During the Civil War*.

*Historical Society of Fort Lauderdale:* Two hundred fifty persons attended the first Annual Dinner held on May 6. Principal speaker and guest of honor was Senator Spessard L. Holland. Senator Holland reminisced about Florida history and his connection with it and spoke of the 1965 Quadricentennial activities in St. Augustine. Business of the evening included adoption of the bylaws of the Society and the election of members of the Board of Trustees. New board members are Russell Menese Gardner, Mrs. William G. Hardy, and James S. Hunt, Sr.

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees, on May 17, the following officers were elected to serve one-year terms: president, August Burghard; first vice-president, C. Philip Weidling; second vice-president, Mrs. Frank Stranahan; secretary, Mrs. Alfred J. Beck; and treasurer, Mrs. William G. Hardy.

C. Philip Weidling was appointed chairman of the membership committee.

*Gulf County Historical Commission:* Created in November, 1962, the most notable accomplishment of this Commission to date has been the placing of a commemorative marker at the site of one of the cemeteries of the old city of St. Joseph. This was achieved in cooperation with the Florida Board of Parks and Historic Memorials. The ceremonial dedication took place on April 4, 1963, on the highway adjoining the old cemetery site. Jesse V. Stone served as master of ceremonies and the marker was unveiled by Mayor Frank Hannon of Port St. Joe. Presentation of the acceptance was by George Y. Core, secretary of the Commission. A large number of political, religious, and historical leaders were present.

Mrs. Hubert Brinson of the St. Joseph Historical Society was the earliest and chief booster of the placement of this marker.

*Jacksonville Historical Society:* At the May meeting Mr. Kenneth H. Beeson spoke on "Glimpses of New Smyrna in the Eight-

eenth Century." Mr. Beeson is a native of St. Augustine and a candidate for the Ph.D. degree in history at the University of Florida. Mr. Beeson made his talk in honor of Dr. Carita Doggett Corse, a descendant of Dr. Andrew Turnbull, founder of the New Smyrna colony.

In June the Society dedicated the Cow Ford Marker in cooperation with the Florida Board of Parks and Historic Memorials. The marker was placed on the grounds of the Duval County Court House, near the foot of Liberty Street. Mr. Robert L. Gold of Gainesville, a student of the British period, was the dedicatory speaker. The legend on the marker reads: "Site of Cow Ford: This narrow part of the St. Johns River near a clear freshwater spring, was a crossing point for Indians and early travellers. The Indian name Wacca Pilatka, meaning 'Cow's Crossing,' was shortened by the English to Cow Ford and Jacksonville was known by this name for many years. This crossing was used by the English when they made an old Timucuan Indian trail into King's Road."

*Lake County Historical Society:* Mrs. Millard V. Coggs shall was elected president of the Society at its annual picnic and meeting last April at Alexander Springs. Also elected were Paul Van Valkenburg, vice-president; Frank E. Owens, secretary-treasurer; and Mrs. Lydia Scott, librarian. The following directors were also named: Clark Kauffman, G. G. Ware, L. Day Edge, J. C. Cowart, Oakley Seaver, C. B. Treadway, O. M. Simpson, T. Stin Haselton, Emmet Hill, H. A. Babb, Mrs. C. E. Shaw, Charles Osborne, Frank E. Bridgman, F. D. Yancey, Emmett Peter, B. M. Kinser, Mrs. Norma Hendricks, and Mrs. Lucie K. Miller.

*Martin County Historical Society:* During May members of the Society had the opportunity to meet Theodore Pratt, author of *Seminole*, and Jim Hutchinson, notable local artist of the Seminole Indians. A social hour was held and members discussed with their guests some of their experiences in writing and painting. The Society recently purchased a Hutchinson portrait of Lucy Tiger, "matriarch of the Muskogee tribe of Seminole Indians," and it now hangs in a place of honor at the Elliott Museum. An "Art Fund" has recently been established to purchase outstanding works of art for display in the Museum.

Museum Director Stephen Schmidt recently was appointed

chairman of the history division of the Southeastern Museums Conference to be held in Miami during October.

*Orange County Historical Commission:* The formal reopening of the County Historical Museum was held in June. The Museum had its origin in the Central Florida Centennial Celebration in April, 1942, when the Antiquarian Society, the Collectors' Assembly, and the Questor's Club were permitted to set up a pioneer kitchen in the old brick 1892 Courthouse. When additional rooms became available, antiques, relics, and historical memorabilia were donated by numbers of families and a museum was established. When the Courthouse was razed in 1957, the museum was closed and its contents stored until new quarters recently became available. The Orange County Historical Commission, which now has charge of the Museum, was created by the County Commission on June 10, 1957. Chairman is Donald Cheney; vice-chairman, James N. Burden; treasurer, Arthur W. Newell; and editor, Rolland Dean. Members of the Commission are Jenkins Dolive, Mrs. Juanita Tucker, Mrs. Donald S. Evans, Henry A. Porter, Mrs. E. L. Mathews, and Harry P. Witherington.

*Polk County Historical Commission:* Dedication ceremonies were held in April at Bartow marking the site of Fort Fraser, an Indian War post built in 1837 under command of General Zachary Taylor. The fort was named in honor of Captain Upton S. Fraser who was killed at Dade's Massacre on December 28, 1835. In charge of the dedicatory ceremonies was Tom O. Brown, chairman of the marker committee.

Officers of the Commission are Floyd Woods, chairman; Charles T. Thrift, Jr., vice-chairman; D. H. Sloan, Jr., secretary; and members Richard A. Bronson, Tom O. Brown, Paul F. Daniel, C. C. Street, and Mrs. Gordon Waring.

*Palm Beach County Historical Society:* Mr. David M. Fee, an effective speaker on the history of the Indian River country, spoke on the topic "Sagas of the Indian River" at the April meeting. A social hour and business meeting followed the program which was the last of the season.

*St. Augustine Historical Society:* At the regular quarterly business meeting in April, Mr. Robert L. Gold discussed some of the

problems involved in the transfer of Florida from Spanish to British rule in 1763-64. The regular July business meeting heard Mr. Harold W. Colee of the Florida State Chamber of Commerce.

*St. Joseph Historical Society:* The Society is proud to report substantial accomplishment in the area of five major projects during the past year. The 1963 Florida legislature appropriated funds for the acquisition of a historical-recreational park on St. Joseph peninsula, and for its development. The idea originated with the Society in 1958 and was energetically pushed by Mrs. Ned Porter. Requests for expansion of the Constitution Convention Memorial Museum, for six years on the Society's agenda, have also finally achieved fruition in the inclusion of funds for the project in the budget of the Board of Parks and Historic Memorials. The existing Centennial Building at Port St. Joe was renovated by the city in June at the instigation of the Society.

The story of the discovery of original wheels from the St. Joseph railway was carried in the *Quarterly* [XXXIX (April, 1961), 354-365]. At the request of the Society, the St. Joe Paper Company subjected the long-submerged railroad wheels to a three-year preservation process. They are now on display at the Constitution Park Museum.

In November of 1962, the Gulf County Commissioners created the Gulf County Historical Commission, long the dream of the Society. The following members were named to the Commission: Mrs. Ned S. Porter, chairman; Mrs. R. H. Brinson, archivist; Dave Gaskin, archivist; William J. Rish, legal advisor; George Y. Core, secretary; Jesse V. Stone, assistant secretary; Charles B. Smith, historian; and William H. Howell, Jr., photographer.

In January, 1963, Mr. Jesse V. Stone was chosen president of the St. Joseph Historical Society.

*Southwest Florida Historical Society:* Recently organized in Fort Myers under the temporary chairmanship of P. A. Geraci, this Society has named Robert Halgrim, manager of the Edison Estate, as its president.

*Volusia County Historical Commission:* An observance of the part played by New Smyrna in the Civil War was held in that

city on July 26, 1963. The program was presented in Old Fort Park on Riverside Drive. A marker was unveiled commemorating the centennial of an attack on New Smyrna by Union gunboats. Judge Robert H. Wingfield of DeLand was the principal speaker. Refreshments were served by the Jane Sheldon Chapter, DAR. The Florida Historical Society was represented by James H. Lipscomb, III, a member of the Board of Directors.

### *State Library and Historical Commission*

The State Library law was revised by the 1963 legislature to create a Florida Library and Historical Commission. The new agency will be effective October 1 and will be administered by a board of seven members appointed by the Governor for four year terms. The present library board is composed of three members.

The new law transfers the powers and duties of the Florida Civil War Centennial Commission to the State Library and Historical Commission. In addition to its present library functions, the purpose of the commission is to give "leadership to the collection, recording, and dissemination of information about Florida history. The Commission shall give parity to the historical and library functions in its own endeavors, and shall cooperate with other agencies, groups, and individuals in bringing events in Florida history to the attention of the public."

### *Progress of Florida Libraries*

Action of the 1963 legislature, according to the official publication of the State Library Board, represents a real set-back to the public library program in Florida. In 1962, twenty-four counties were assisted in establishing libraries at a cost of \$284,544. For the 1963-65 biennium, a request was made for \$1,317,705 to aid thirty-two counties during 1963-64 and forty-five counties during 1964-65. The legislative appropriation was \$200,000.

*Library Trends*, a national publication, reported in April of 1963 that Florida's local libraries ranked 26th among the states in 1961. In per capita State expenditures for public libraries, Florida ranked 43rd in 1956, and 50th in 1961. Comparative rankings for 1963 are not yet available.



*The Hakluyt Society*

The Hakluyt Society, doubtless familiar to many members of our Society, is a venerable English organization which publishes historical works concerning all parts of the world. Its annual dues are now \$6.00 and for this each member receives two historical volumes, approximately, each year. One of our esteemed members, Mr. David O. True, is a member of the organization and kindly offers to recommend for membership any members of the Florida Historical Society who desire to join. Mr. True writes, "I can assure our members that these volumes, covering knowledge of early world history to the present, are very well worth the cost." Interested members may address Mr. True at 1690 S. W. 27th Avenue, Miami, 45, Florida, for application blanks and information.

*Harry S. Truman Library*

The Truman Library continues to add to its acquisitions of manuscripts, newspapers, books, and oral history dealing with recent times. Applications may still be made to the Library Institute for grants-in-aid, providing up to \$1,000 each for travel and living expenses while at the Library. The Institute favors grants to promising students and young scholars working on projects involving the Truman administration and the history and nature of the Presidency. Application forms may be had from Philip C. Brooks, Director of the Library, Independence, Missouri.